

TOWN OF EGREMONT, MASSACHUSETTS
JOINT MEETING OF THE SELECT/FINANCE COMMITTEE
/ REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES

Date: January 28, 2021
Time: 5:03pm
Place: Via Zoom Meeting
Egremont

Present remotely via zoom meeting were Chairman George McGurn, Vice-Chair Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen, Board member Mary Brazie.

Others present via zoom: RSDBP members: Lucy Prashker, Peter Taylor, Danile Jordan, Bonnie Silvers, Thomas Berkel; Finance Committee members Thomas Berkel; Public Mary McGurn.

The meeting was audio and video recorded.

The Regional School District Planning Board(RSDPB), was formed in March of 2020. The Board's membership includes 3 members from each of the 8 towns in the Berkshire Hills and the Southern Berkshire Regional School Districts. The Board was formed to explore, consider and evaluate a broad spectrum of options from shared serves between the two districts to full consolidation of the two districts.

Chairman of the RSDPB, Lucy Prashker, presented the work of the Board to date, the proposed Phase 2 work, and the need for funds for the Phase 2 work. (See attached report and request)

During Phase I the Board engaged a facilitator to help build norms for communication, group process, and decision making among the 24 members, and engaged the Mass Association of Regional Schools(MARS) to analyze data and provide preliminary reports.

At this time the Board is asking for each of the 8 towns in the two school districts to appropriate \$15,000 for FY 22. A grant in the amount of \$125,000 has been applied for. The request for funds to the town's anticipates an award of \$50,000. If a larger award is made the amount requested will be adjusted accordingly. West Stockbridge and Alford have already committed to placing an article on their town meeting warrants. Great Barrington Selectboard has expressed support but has asked the RSDPB for a presentation before the Finance Committee.

Berkshire Taconic Foundation has awarded a \$2500 grant to the Board for FY 21. The Board has asked both the Berkshire Hills and the Southern Berkshire Districts for \$3,000 in bridge funds. Berkshire Hills has already committed to that and Southern Berkshire's decision is pending.

Vice-Chairman Vermeulen thanked the Board and asked for a delineation on the decline in enrollment in the districts. Over a period of 2010 to present both districts have seen declining enrollment with Southern Berkshire's decline exceeding Berkshire Hills. Tom Berkel said on average Berkshire Hills has declined at 2.4% per year with Southern Berkshire declining at over 3%.

Tom Berkel urged the board to guard against putting weight on enrollment decline but to consider quality and ability to pay.

Selectboard member Brazie thanked the SBRPB for its cohesive effort to investigate any and all consolidation and sharing opportunities, noting that she felt the Town's could not afford not to look at these options.

The Selectboard voted unanimously to put an article on its town meeting warrant to fund the work of the RSDPB by not more than \$15,000.

Meeting adjourned at 5:53pm.

Mary Brazie,
Office Administrator

minutes.21/jan28sbfcrsdpb

The recording of the minutes is on record at the Town Hall for 90 days. Anyone who wishes to may obtain a copy or listen to the recording at Town Hall. Attachments are on file at Town Hall.